

MEMORANDUM FOR 303 COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: Retention of U-2R Capability

1. As a result of concerns of the EXCOM and pressures from the BOB I have become concerned about the needs for a U-2R capability, whether it is in the Agency, SAC, or both. To this end I have had a review of the subject made and I am forwarding a copy for your consideration.

2. After a review of the paper I find that while the cost and support virtues of consolidation in the Agency are very appealing, the most important consideration is the retention of a covert reconnaissance capability which can rapidly deploy to any place in the world. I feel that [REDACTED] as well as the launch and recovery from aircraft carriers on any of the world's seas, gives us an important non-attributable capability.

3. It is my opinion that the availability of this flexible, quick reaction capability for covert reaction to worldwide crises more than justifies the cost of retention. I recognize that broad U.S. policy considerations must govern U-2 operations and decisions, especially as far as [REDACTED] are concerned. And it is true that for the past few years we have been reluctant to allow overflights even with covert manned aircraft. However, I think it is important to note that in times of crisis our attitude in this regard can change rapidly. It is for such contingencies that a covert capability like the U-2 would in my opinion become very important to the President. If we terminate this program now, this option will be lost.

Richard Helms
Director of Central Intelligence

Attachment -
As stated